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SOURCES OF WOMEN WORKERS IN WAR-TIME.

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SOURCES OF WOMEN WORKERS IN WARTIME

Wartime demands for women workers have been filled by women of all ages, by mothers with young children as well as by women with no family responsibilities. The groups in the population that have supplied the greatest proportions of additional workers and the number left in reserve at the peak of the military production program have been estimated on the basis of the results of a sample survey, issued today by Director J. C. Capt of the Bureau of the Census, Department of Commerce. Information on marital status and number of children under 14 for women in the labor force and those outside was obtained in February 1944, as a supplement to the Monthly Report on the Labor Force, the Census Bureau's regular monthly survey of a sample of the civilian population.

Factors determining whether or not a woman is working or seeking work range all the way from need to support herself and her family to such considerations as her husband's attitude toward working wives, or, in wartime, her patriotism. In most cases, however, her age and marital status, and her responsibility for care of her children are of primary importance in determining her availability for employment.

In February 1944, there were an estimated 22,400,000 women not in the labor force who were not primarily responsible for the care of children and who might therefore be regarded as most likely to be available for employment. These included 5,700,000 women who were single and an additional 16,700,000 who were married, or widowed or divorced, and had no children under 14 (Table 1). They constituted 43 percent of all women 14 years and over. Examination of the ages of these women suggests, however, that most of them were in the age groups in which employment, particularly in war industries, is difficult to obtain or not even desired. Some 13 million of the 22,400,000 were 45 years or older and 4,500,000 were under 20 and in the majority of cases still in school. The remaining 4,800,000 aged 20 to 45 then constitute the principal reserve of woman power, which could be effective only if the women were located in areas of demand, suitable for the type of work needing to be done, and without responsibilities other than young children to prevent their employment. Almost one-fifth, for example, lived on farms and although part of the potential supply of farm workers, should not be counted upon for industrial jobs in war production centers.

In the age group 20 to 35—that is, the group that is considered most employable and that has often been discussed in connection with plans for compulsory service—41 percent were in the labor force and another 45 percent outside the labor force but responsible for the care of children under 14. Thus, almost 9 out of every 10 women in this age group were either in the labor force already or had young children who probably required their presence at home. The number of women aged 20-34 outside the labor force who were unmarried or who had no children under 14 in February 1944 is estimated at 2,300,000, of whom less than 600,000 were single. Only a negligible number of this group reported that they were unable to work.

In terms of over-all figures, however, it is clear that the United States, with almost 4 million nonfarm women between the ages of 20 and 45 outside the labor force and having no children under 14, had not exhausted its potential reserve in reaching almost peak levels of wartime activity. The reserve is such, however, that vigorous measures would be necessary to bring it forth.

Work Rates by Marital Status and Age in February 1944

Single women, with 55 percent working or seeking work, were in the labor force in substantially larger proportions than any other group (Table 2). Theirs was the maximum work rate in every age class except the school age group under 20. Married women whose husbands were still at home showed a much lower work rate in every age class than did married women whose husbands were absent in the armed forces. In both groups of married women, almost half reported that they had children under 14, but servicemen's wives had on the average fewer children and probably found it easier to hold jobs.

Although their work rates differed markedly, married women of all types, as well as those widowed or divorced, showed the same pattern of increasing work rates up to the age group 35-44. The maximum rate of labor market participation was found in that age because women from 35 through 44 tend to have fewer young children to keep them at home and are not yet seriously handicapped in the labor market by their age.

Single women, by contrast, had the maximum proportion in the labor force in the 20-24 age group but the proportions in the next two age classes were only slightly smaller. They dropped from 86.5 percent at the peak to 80.8 percent in the 35-44 group, and down to 50.7 percent for single women 45 and over.

Changes since 1940

Comparison of the results of the sample survey with data from the Census of Population, March 1940 shows the net changes in the female labor force that are attributable to the complex social and economic shifts associated with the defense program and the war. The most important fact revealed is that married women in the middle age groups have been the largest source of additional workers. Women aged 35 and over have entered the labor force since March 1940 in greater numbers than have any other age group, and account for 2,200,000 of the 3,600,000 net increase in female labor force since that date (Table 2). Almost three-fourths of the additional women workers 35 and over were married women whose husbands were living at home, and in most cases at work themselves. Part of this change is the result of the increase in the number of married women of these ages, but the larger part must be credited to the actual increase in the extent of labor market participation, probably in many cases in response to the widespread appeals for women workers to replace men gone to the armed forces. If the work rates prevailing in 1940 had continued among married women over 35, the number in the labor force in February would have been almost 1-1/2 million fewer.

Women under 35 accounted for two-fifths of the net increase in the labor force since 1940. In this age group, the number of workers increased most sharply among unmarried girls under 20 (800,000) many of whom left school to enter the labor force, and among women aged 20 to 35 whose husbands were absent or who were widowed or divorced, (1,000,000). The increase in the second group is accounted for chiefly by women whose husbands were away from home, either serving in the armed forces, or working. How many of the servicemen's wives who had jobs in February were in the labor force when their husbands were inducted is not known, but it is likely that had there been no Selective Service Act, the work rate of this group would have more nearly resembled that of married women of the same age with husbands still at home.

In contrast with the extreme increases since 1940 in the work rates of unmarried girls aged 14-19 and of married women aged 35 and over whose husbands were living at home, the proportion of certain other groups in the labor force has remained almost stable or decreased. The fact that there has been no increase in the number or proportion of married women aged 20-34 who are working is undoubtedly the result of the rise in the birth rate since 1940.

Labor Force Participation of Women with Children Under 14

Obligation for the care of their children is the main reason why women do not take jobs in response to all the demands for their services in the war period. Nevertheless, over

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2,700,000 working women or about one-sixth of the women in the labor force in February 1944 reported that they had children under 14. In the age group 25-34, almost one out of every three women in the labor force was the mother of young children (Table 3). To what extent the presence of other younger or older women in the household made it possible for these women to take jobs was not determined by the February survey but the wartime doubling-up of families has frequently shifted the burden of child care from the mother to someone of a less employable age in the household. The fact that in February over 3 million married women were living in households of which they were neither the head nor the wife of the head suggests that this sort of shift could have been fairly common.

With the coming of peace, homes which have been broken up will be reestablished and many hundreds of thousands of working women can be expected to become full-time housewives again. It is probable that the proportion of married women working in February will not be exceeded except at the peak of the agricultural season during the present summer months.

A more detailed analysis of the work status of women with children in February 1944 as compared with that in March 1940 will be published in the near future.

Nature of Sample

The sample for the Monthly Report on the Labor Force from which the estimates for February 1944 were derived, comprises 30,000 scientifically selected households in 68 sample areas, which include 123 counties. The sample areas are located in 42 States and the District of Columbia. The information obtained relates to the civilian population 14 years old and over, excluding inmates of institutions.

In the use of the 1944 data presented in this release, it should be borne in mind that such statistics are subject to a certain amount of sampling error. The error that may be expected is proportionately largest for those categories having relatively small numbers and for categories containing groups of the population that are unequally distributed throughout the nation.

Some of the estimates shown in the accompanying tables are too small to be considered trustworthy measures of absolute magnitudes. They are included only as indicators of general relationships with other more important categories in the population.

TABLE 1.—ESTIMATES OF WOMEN 14 YEARS OLD AND OVER IN THE CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE AND OF THE MARITAL STATUS OF WOMEN NOT IN THE LABOR FORCE, BY AGE, FEBRUARY 6-12, 1944[1]

(Figures in thousands, rounded to nearest 10,000)

LABOR FORCE AND MARITAL STATUS	TOTAL		14-19 YEARS		20-24 YEARS		25-34 YEARS		35-44 YEARS		45 YEARS AND OVER	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	52,300	100.0	6,960	100.0	16,880	100.0	5,980	100.0	10,900	100.0	9,870	100.0	18,590	100.0
In the labor force	16,630	31.8	2,130	30.6	6,990	41.4	3,130	52.3	3,860	35.3	3,600	36.5	2,910	21.0
Not in the labor force	35,670	68.2	4,830	69.4	9,890	58.6	2,850	47.7	7,040	64.7	6,270	63.5	14,680	79.0
Single	5,690	10.9	4,220	60.8	590	3.5	330	5.5	260	2.4	200	2.0	670	3.6
Married, with children under 14	12,900	24.6	310	4.5	7,560	44.8	1,910	32.0	5,650	51.9	3,630	37.0	1,450	7.8
Married, without children under 14	12,390	23.7	280	4.0	1,640	9.7	580	9.7	1,060	9.7	2,280	22.5	8,250	44.4
Widowed or divorced, with children under 14	330	0.6	10	0.1	80	0.5	20	0.3	60	0.6	100	1.0	140	0.8
Widowed or divorced, without children under 14	4,280	8.2	-	-	20	0.1	10	0.2	10	0.1	100	1.0	4,160	22.4

[1] Excludes institutional population.

TABLE 2.—MARITAL STATUS OF WOMEN 14 YEARS OLD AND OVER IN THE CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE, BY AGE: MARCH 24-30, 1940 AND ESTIMATES FOR FEBRUARY 6-12, 1944[1]

(Figures in thousands, rounded to nearest 10,000)

	TOTAL		14-19 YEARS		20-24 YEARS		25-34 YEARS		35-44 YEARS		45 YEARS AND OVER	
	1940	1944	1940	1944	1940	1944	1940	1944	1940	1944	1940	1944
Total	13,010	16,630	1,400	2,130	2,700	3,130	3,590	3,860	2,490	3,600	2,830	3,910
Single	6,380	6,940	1,310	1,930	2,060	2,110	1,610	1,380	690	880	710	640
Married, husband present	3,920	5,410	60	70	490	400	1,490	1,410	1,080	1,980	800	1,550
Other	2,710	4,280	20	130	150	620	550	1,070	720	890	1,260	1,570
Husband absent in armed forces	(2)	1,380	(2)	120	(2)	500	(2)	610	(2)	120	(2)	30
All other	(2)	2,900	(2)	10	(2)	120	(2)	460	(2)	760	(2)	1,550
	Percent in Labor Force											
Total	26.0	31.8	19.1	30.6	45.8	52.3	33.4	35.4	27.4	36.5	16.6	21.0
Single	46.2	54.9	19.8	31.3	73.8	86.5	79.7	84.1	75.0	80.6	48.3	50.7
Married, husband present	13.8	18.9	9.2	16.7	17.3	17.3	18.1	19.0	15.3	29.1	8.6	13.0
Other	34.5	38.8	37.5	34.2	55.6	50.4	67.1	58.5	63.7	65.9	22.7	23.1
Husband absent in armed forces	(2)	50.0	(2)	36.4	(2)	49.0	(2)	54.0	(2)	56.5	(2)	40.0
All other	(2)	35.0	(2)	20.0	(2)	37.1	(2)	65.7	(2)	67.9	(2)	25.0

[1] Excludes institutional population.
[2] Statistics for the very small number of women with husband in the armed forces in 1940 are not available.

TABLE 3.—ESTIMATED PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN 14 YEARS OLD AND OVER BY LABOR FORCE STATUS AND PRESENCE OF CHILDREN UNDER 14, FEBRUARY 6-12, 1944[1]

(Figures rounded to nearest 10,000)

	TOTAL	14-19 YEARS	20-24 YEARS	25-34 YEARS	35-44 YEARS	45 YEARS AND OVER
Total: Number	52,300,000	6,960,000	5,980,000	10,900,000	9,870,000	18,590,000
Total: Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
In civilian labor force	31.8	30.6	52.3	35.4	36.5	21.0
With own children under 14	5.3	0.7	5.3	10.4	9.5	1.8
Without children under 14	26.5	29.9	47.0	25.0	27.0	19.2
Not in civilian labor force	68.2	69.4	47.7	64.6	63.5	79.0
With children under 14	25.5	4.9	32.6	32.5	20.0	8.6
Without children under 14	42.7	64.5	15.1	12.1	23.5	70.4

[1] Excludes institutional population.

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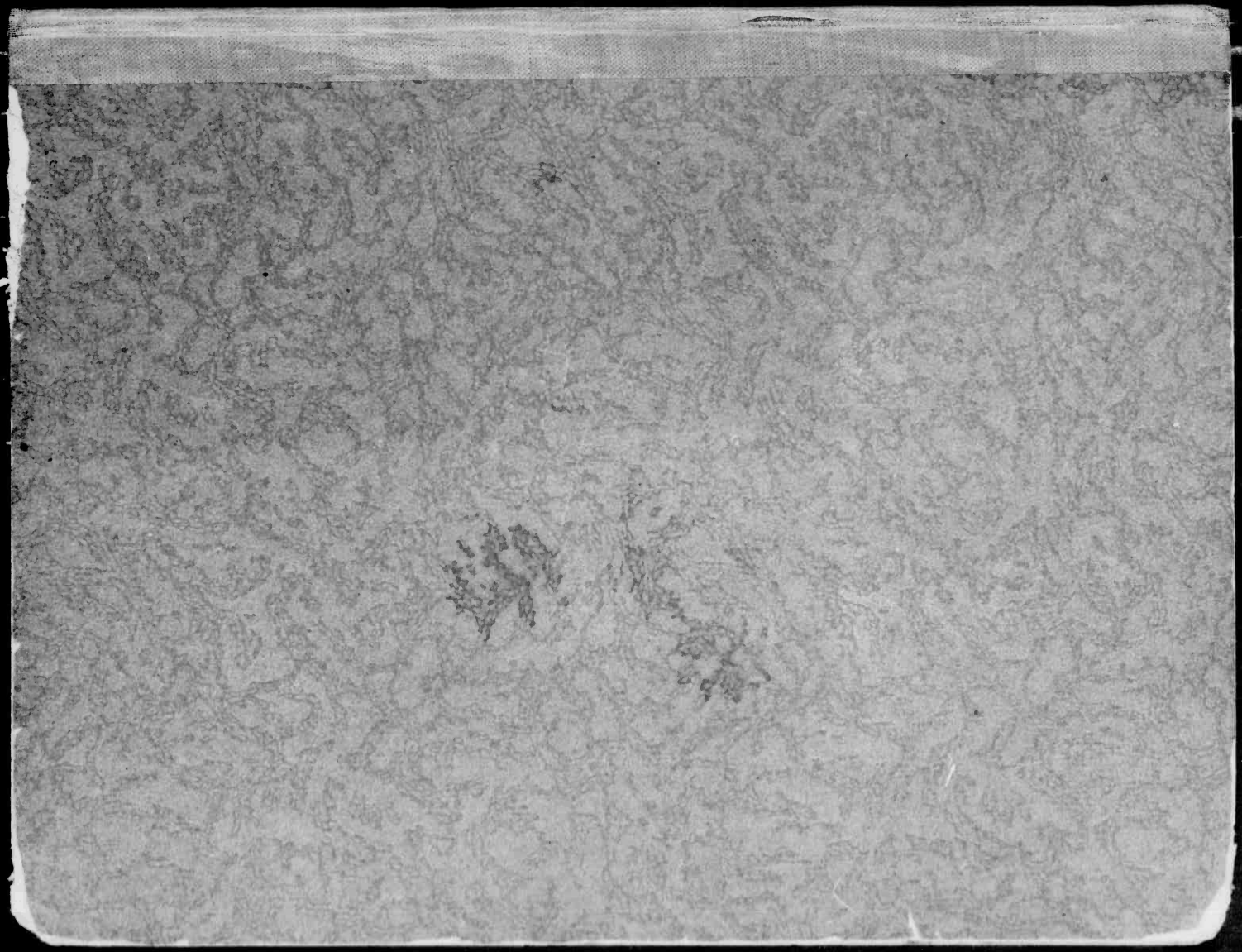

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